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# PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENTS IN MAJORITARIAN AND CONSENSUS DEMOCRACIES

Brigitte Geissel and Ank Michels

*Recently, many democracies have developed towards more citizens' involvement in direct democracy or public deliberation. Are these developments linked to different types of democracy? Can public deliberation be mainly found in consensus democracies, whereas direct democracy prevails in majoritarian democracies? By analysing OECD countries around the year 2012, we examine these assumptions. The answer is surprisingly clear. The choice of a democracy to opt for direct democratic instruments or for public deliberation is neither dichotomous nor is it related to the respective pattern type of democracy. Based on these findings, a new typology with four participatory models of democracy is suggested.*

## Introduction

Democracy is a dynamic, protean concept and a constantly developing reality. Since the 1990s, many democracies have moved in one way or another towards more participatory citizens' involvement and a common trend towards increasing citizen engagement can be observed (Geissel and Newton 2012; Michels 2011; Smith 2009). The introduction of democratic innovations that increase and deepen citizen participation in political will-formation and decision making is now a common policy of democratic governments.

However, participatory developments are far from consistent. They vary considerably—some countries seem to prefer direct democratic options (Scarrow 2001)—others seem to opt for fostering public deliberation on political issues (Ansell and Gingrich 2006; see Table 2). The background of these different developments is up to now under-researched. Generally, a variety of approaches are applied to explore respective developments (e.g., Mahoney and Thelen 2010), e.g., functionalist approaches emphasising the adaption to new challenges in order to provide efficiency; rational choice theories explaining changes mainly with preferences and utility-maximising interests of political actors, especially political decision-makers; historical institutionalism that shifted the focus of individual action from self-interested pursuit to adaptive behaviour relative to the context; and sociological institutionalism focusing on the linkage between individual actors, institutions, and the context in which they act (Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

In this paper, we focus on the question, whether preferences for a specific type of participation are related to institutional settings within a country (Thelen 1999). There is a general consensus in the social sciences that institutions matter. Institutions are important because they shape the behaviour of decision-makers, create and maintain power and form a large

part of the political landscape. Lijphart's (1999) distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracy sets the bases for our examination. We examine whether preferences of a political system for direct democracy versus public deliberation are linked to Lijphart's typology of majoritarian and consensus democracies, i.e., whether they are characteristics of this typology (e.g., Hendriks and Michels 2011). Some authors expect that extensive public deliberation will be found more often in consensus-oriented democracies like the Netherlands, assuming that these democracies are resistant towards the idea of 'counting individual votes rather than developing shared visions' (Hendriks 2010: 259). In contrast, direct democratic instruments seem to be more in line with the logic of majoritarian countries (Hendriks and Michels 2011).<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we will not trace developments or path-dependencies, but explore whether the level of public deliberation and direct democracy in a democracy is related to Lijphart's typology.

This article examines whether societies with high levels of public deliberation can be found especially in consensus democracies, whereas preferences for direct democracy prevail in majoritarian democracies. Are those authors right, who assume relations between the type of democracy and the extent of public deliberation versus direct democracy? The first section introduces the state of the art and develops some hypotheses. The second section discusses the methodology, the measurement and the data. The final sections present the results and a summary of the findings.

### State of the Art and Hypotheses

Since a couple of years, literature on direct democracy and public deliberation is proliferating but only a few studies cover the topic of this article. This section first briefly introduces relevant literature with a focus on studies trying to identify the correlation between direct democracy, public deliberation and the type of democracy, in which they are applied.

#### Direct democracy and public deliberation

In the last decades, direct democracy has been on the rise (Scarrow 2001). Direct democratic instruments found their way into almost all new constitutions of post-socialist states, and also many established democracies have passed similar laws. Whereas, for example, obligatory referenda have been almost unknown in Europe until the 1990s, today sixteen European states have institutionalised them in their national or regional constitutions (Morel 2007; Scarrow 2001; Kersting and Vetter 2003: 342).

Some democracies took another track and focused on the enhancement of public deliberation, e.g., to provide meaningful consultation for policy-makers. Many governments around the world support public deliberation with different means, for example by passing respective laws or by organising dialogue-oriented procedures<sup>2</sup> and committees (Ansell and Gingrich 2006; OECD 2001). Some examples illustrate this trend: The British *Department of the Environment, Transport and the Region* set up guidelines for local policy-making at the end of the 1990s requiring citizens' involvement in decisions on local transportation (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001). The French law *Démocratie de proximité* (2002) demands to establish local committees of civil society actors, which should advise local decision-making bodies on specific issues. At the beginning of the 1990s, Hungary introduced a *Minority Self-Government System* and has recently revised it. Finland has passed rules called the *Participation Project* and Sweden revived its *Local Boards* (for more examples: Kersting and Vetter 2003).

Comparative analyses on direct democratic procedures and public deliberation are just starting. Most studies shed light on either direct democratic instruments (e.g., Scarrow 2001; Schiller et al. 2011), or on specific deliberative procedures such as *Participatory Budgeting* (Sintomer et al. 2005) and *Local Agenda 21* (e.g., Geissel 2009; European Institute for Public Participation 2009; Participedia 2016). These studies provide important contributions to the debate on the future of democracy, but they deliver little information considering the questions of this article. So, what do we know about direct democracy and deliberation within different types of democracy?

### Types of representative democracy, direct democracy and deliberation

Political science provides several concepts to categorise types of democracy; the most well-known is Lijphart's (1999) distinction between majoritarian and consensus patterns. In the majoritarian model, political power is concentrated, whereas, in the consensus model, power is shared, dispersed, and limited in a variety of ways (Lijphart 1999: 1–4; Bormann 2010). The majoritarian model is characterised by single-party majority cabinets, a dominant executive, a two-party system, a majoritarian electoral system, and a pluralist interest group system (executive-parties dimension). On a second dimension, the federal-unitary dimension, the majoritarian model is organised around unitary and centralised government, unicameral legislation, flexible constitutions, no judicial review, and central banks that are dependent on the executive. In the contrasting consensus model, power is shared in broad, multi-party coalitions, multi-party systems, a proportional electoral system, federal and decentralised government, and two equally strong but differently constituted houses. Lijphart (1999) argues that most democracies can be located on a continuum somewhere between these extremes (see also Bormann 2010). In our analysis, we will refer to the executive-parties dimension, because in line with most scholars we consider this dimension as more decisive for participatory developments (e.g., Aarts et al. 2014; Bernauer et al. 2014). There are, for example, no reasons to assume that the organisation of central banks or the number of legislative chambers (uni- or bi-cameral) influence the evolvement of public participation within a country.

Since both consensus and majoritarian democracies have experienced developments towards more citizens' involvement in political will-formation and decision-making, the question emerged, whether a preference for direct democracy or public deliberation within a country is related to the consensual versus majoritarian theoretical axis of the Lijphart typology. Lijphart (1984: 31) himself had concluded that 'the concept of direct democracy cannot be regarded as either typically majoritarian or typically consensual' and public deliberation was not yet a crucial political science topic at that time. Today, it is often assumed that rules based on majoritarian decision making, i.e., direct democracy, are more in line with the logic of majoritarian democracies—in contrast to highly deliberative societies which are expected to be found more often in consensus democracies.

Steiner et al. (2004) were among the first scholars who assumed that consensus-oriented institutions go hand in hand with an orientation towards deliberation. They examined the 'cultural aspect of power sharing theory' and showed that 'power sharing theory should be noticed not only from the perspective of institutionalism' but also 'from the viewpoint of behavioralism' (Mafakheri 2016: 265). Steiner et al. (2004) as well as Mafakheri (2016) argue in line with Lijphart's (1977, 1968) former work that democracies with consensus-oriented institutional settings ('consociational' Lijphart 1977) most likely also apply behavioural mechanisms of cooperation, moderation, compromise and accommodation (Lijphart 1977, 1968),

negotiation, conversation and argument (Steiner et al. 2004) i.e., the crucial principles of deliberation. Consensus democracy and deliberation are considered as connected conceptually (see Mafakheri 2016; see also Bormann 2010). However, Steiner and his team compared deliberation within parliaments in consensus and majoritarian democracies, e.g., Switzerland and UK. This study on deliberation among political representatives was important and instructive. We are, however, interested in *participatory developments*. Research on the behaviour of representatives cannot answer our question about the connection between institutional patterns of democracy on the one hand and the evolvement of the participation of citizens and civil society on the other hand.

The link between majoritarian democracy and direct democracy might not be as straightforward, but more equivocal. Majoritarian democracy focuses on concentrating power—in contrast to the power-diffusive consensus type. From that perspective, sharing power with citizens by introducing referenda seems somewhat contradictory. However, the logic of ‘aggregating votes’ as the main mechanism of decision making in majoritarian systems creating clear winners, the respective majority, is identical with the logic of direct democracy. Thus, it can be assumed that in general direct democracy fits better into systems following the majoritarian pattern—although, as will be discussed below the differentiation between power-diffusing (‘bottom-up’) and power-concentrating (‘top-down’) variants of direct democracy is necessary (see Vatter 2009).

Does the prevalence of direct democracy (aggregated votes) or public deliberation (deliberative democracy) in different democracies follow the patterns as expected? Few authors have examined the connection between Lijphart’s patterns of democracy and direct democracy or public deliberation, respectively, on empirical grounds (e.g., Hendriks and Michels 2011; Vatter 2000). Some studies confirm the hypothesis about the logic of majoritarian and consensus democracies partly (Qvortrup 2005; Setälä 2006). Other studies draw contradictory conclusions. A detailed analysis of the British and the Dutch case demonstrates that differences are less pronounced than could have been expected (Hendriks and Michels 2011). The Dutch case (consensus democracy) shows a somewhat stronger tendency towards public deliberation than the British case (majoritarian democracy), but the latter case is not the complete opposite of the former: Deliberative innovations have found their way also to Britain and local direct democratic instruments have become common practice in the Netherlands.

A study by Vatter and Bernauer (2009) does not compare the extent of direct democracy and public deliberation in different types of democracy but focuses on direct democracy. Nevertheless, the study is interesting in the context of this article: The authors distinguish between different types of direct democratic instruments, arguing that some of these instruments are characteristic of majoritarian democracies and other direct democratic instruments better fit into consensus democracies. According to Vatter and Bernauer (2009), referendums that can only be called by the government or a parliamentary majority (top down, decision-promoting) are in line with majoritarian democracy, whereas referendums that can be launched by citizens or a parliamentary minority (bottom-up, decision-controlling) are more in line with consensus democracy. Citizens’ initiatives are considered as consensus-oriented because they act as a ‘power sharing instrument’, which is typical for consensus-oriented democracies (Vatter 2009: 130). In addition to this, Vatter (2009) hypothesised simple majority plebiscites as a feature of majoritarian democracy and direct democratic instruments requiring supermajorities as characteristics of consensus democracy. These insights and considerations are necessary to think beyond the dichotomous typology of consensus and majoritarian

democracy. But they neglect public deliberation as a potential alternative potentially fitting even better into consensus democracies.

Up to now, no research has systematically scrutinised, whether majoritarian and consensus-oriented democracies tend more towards direct democracy or towards public deliberation. Previous comparative research only examines the prevalence of direct democratic instruments, i.e., does not compare the prevalence of direct democracy versus public deliberation (Vatter and Bernauer 2009). There is no empirical comparison, whether and how the level of public deliberation and direct democracy correlate with different types of democracy. This article is the first to examine comparatively potential correlations of direct democratic instruments and deliberation on the one side with majoritarian and consensus-oriented democracies on the other side. We can, however, not deny that their might also be a connection between direct democracy and deliberation. As several authors have pointed out, comprehensive direct democracy might under some circumstances go hand in hand with comprehensive public deliberation (LeDuc 2015). We will take this option into account in the empirical analyses.

### Hypotheses

Based on the insight that existing institutional structures of representative democracy most likely form and mould the development of participatory instruments, three hypotheses can be formulated.

H<sub>1</sub>: In consensus-oriented democracies, public deliberation is more widespread than in majoritarian-oriented democracies;

H<sub>2</sub>: In majoritarian democracies, direct democracy is more widespread than in consensus democracies.

H<sub>3</sub>: Consensus and majoritarian democracies developed two different, distinct and unique patterns considering direct democracy and public deliberation.

### Methodology and Measurement

This article uses several data sets to examine quantitatively correlations between types of democracy, direct democracy, and public deliberation. If correlations exist, this would be a clear indication that patterns of participation are related to types of (consensus or majoritarian) democracy.

We selected established consolidated democracies with a similar level of socioeconomic development (for a similar approach see Vatter 2009). OECD countries are a common and reasonable choice, fulfilling this requirement. The point in time we intend to look at is around the year 2012. Having a longer time frame might appear more preferable and we checked for long-term data on direct democracy (since 2000) provided by Altman (2015). This test did not change the outcome of our results. It was not possible to run a similar test considering deliberative democracy, because data for both—countries and years—allowing for calculating long-run analysis is missing. However, there are no reasons to assume that a longer time frame would change our results since public deliberation within a society is most likely a long-term societal feature, which does not change substantially on a yearly basis. Furthermore, since we are not interested in the process of introducing these innovations, but in the correlations between structural contexts, i.e., type of democracy and the prevalence

of direct democracy versus public deliberation, it suffices to take one point in time into account.

### Measurement and data

Considering the measurement and categorisation of democracies, several data sets are available. Lijphart's analyses in 1999 were the first and it was replicated and moulded several times. Among the most recent ones is the categorisation by Aarts et al. (2014), which is based on Bernauer et al. (2014) repetition of Lijphart's (1999) calculations. As explained above, for this calculation, only the executive-parties dimension was applied, which is the crucial dimension in the context of the research question of this article. Table 1 informs about the classification of OECD-countries as majoritarian or consensus democracy.

For the measurement of the direct democratic instruments, this study makes use of the data sets of two Quality-of-Democracy-Measurements, the *Democracy Barometer* and the *Varieties of Democracy Project* (V-Dem) (also: Centre for Research on Direct Democracy; Index of Direct Democracy by Vatter, 2009: 140–41). The Democracy Barometer, an index developed

**TABLE 1**  
Consensus and majoritarian democracies

	C = consensus M = majoritarian
Australia	M
Belgium	C
Canada	M
Chile	M
Czech Republic	C
Denmark	C
Finland	C
France	M
Germany	(M)
Hungary	M
Iceland	M
Ireland	M
Israel	C
Italy	C
Japan	C
Mexico	M
Netherlands	C
New Zealand	M
Norway	C
Poland	C
Portugal	M
Slovenia	C
Spain	M
Sweden	C
Switzerland	C
UK	M
US	M

*Note:* Countries not covered by Aarts et al. (2014) are excluded. We must remark that the table organises the countries in a dichotomous way, whereas the classification is a continuous one. Germany, for example, should be classified as in between consensus and majoritarian and just slightly on the majoritarian side (for details see also Bernauer et al. 2014: 31).

*Source:* Aarts, et al. (2014).

by a team of Swiss and German scholars (Bühlmann et al. 2012), measures how many direct democratic instruments are available in a country: One point is given if a country provides the following direct democratic instruments: (1) Mandatory referendum; (2) veto-player referendum; (3) popular veto; and (4) popular initiative. This calculation gives a first impression about the level of direct democracy in a country. The second data set on Direct Democracy, developed by V-Dem, provides more comprehensive information. V-Dem is an international collaborative, large-scale undertaking, gathering data on a multitude of indicators. V-Dem includes and combines different indicators on direct democratic options<sup>3</sup> in its *direct popular vote index*, which measures to what extent the direct popular vote is utilised (see [appendix](#) for details). Whereas the Democracy Barometer relies on objective data, the V-Dem project relies on experts' opinions. Connecting and contrasting both data sets gives a thorough and comprehensive measurement for the extent and scope of direct democracy in a country.<sup>4</sup>

The data situation is less comfortable for measuring the level of deliberative democracy in a given country. Most studies measure deliberation looking at one or a few discrete deliberative procedures, measuring the level of deliberation within these procedures. Sufficient data for comparative research is not available. Steiner et al. (2004) had examined deliberation of political representatives in consensus and majoritarian democracy, providing comparative data. In contrast, our paper focuses on public deliberation, i.e., deliberation within civil society and between citizens. In order to compare participatory developments, it would have been interesting to compare the numbers of public deliberative procedures conducted in the countries of interest. However, such quantitative data on public deliberative procedures is not available—neither for single countries nor in comparative perspective. And, what is more important in the context of our research question, we are interested in the overall deliberative activity within a nation. In other words: It is not the number or design of discrete deliberative procedures taking place in different countries we intend to quantify, but the general deliberativeness of a society. Or, as one of the most prominent scholars in the field John Dryzek (2010: 14) emphasised, deliberation must be examined 'in its entirety, rather than assess component parts in isolation', i.e., on the system level. A lively debate within scholars on deliberation unfolded since few years about how to measure deliberation at the macro level. Several scholars have started to develop conceptual frameworks in order to measure deliberation in a comparative perspective, including for example the deliberativeness of media, the deliberative capacity of a citizenry and the Political Opportunity Structures (e.g., Niemeyer et al. 2016; Fung and Warren 2011; Dryzek 2009; Wessler 2008). However, these conceptual approaches have hardly been applied empirically and if so, only in small n comparisons. For example, Pomatto and Seddone (2018) measured mediated deliberation in Italy, Spain and France. Large N comparative data sets are missing.

The V-Dem project includes several indicators on deliberative democracy. Most of these indicators refer to deliberation among the political elite. Since we are interested in the participatory developments of a country, elite communication can hardly be a proxy for public deliberation. Our study requires data on public deliberation, which focusses less on standard definitions such as mutual aspects or exchange of arguments since these indicators can hardly be applied in comparative macro-level research. The V-Dem-Project provides one indicator, which considers public, participatory deliberation and measures 'how wide and independent' public deliberation is (Coppedge et al. 2016; see [appendix](#) for details). Although this indicator is not a perfect proxy, it provides comparable insights and discernments.

The following table (Table 2) shows the level of deliberative and direct democracy in OECD countries (2012). Considering the measurement of deliberation most of the findings

**TABLE 2**  
Deliberative and Direct Democracy Indices

Index	Public deliberation		Direct democracy	
	V-Dem-Project 2012		V-Dem-Project 2012	Democracy Barometer 2012
Country	'When important policy changes are being considered, how wide and how independent are public deliberations?' <sup>a</sup>		'To what extent is the direct popular vote utilised?' <sup>b</sup>	Direct democratic instruments <sup>c</sup>
	Interval	Ordinal		
Australia	1.86	4	.23	1 <sup>1</sup>
Austria	2.19	5	.19	2 <sup>1,3</sup>
Belgium	1.34	4	.03	0
Canada	1.72	4	.02	1 <sup>2</sup>
Chile	1.88	4	.02	0
Czech Republic	1.22	3	.16	0
Denmark	2.96	5	.18	2
Estonia	2.32	5	.19	0
Finland	2.53	5	.02	0
France	2.13	5	.19	1 <sup>2</sup>
Germany	2.19	5	.10	0
Greece	2.57	5	.03	1 <sup>2</sup>
Hungary	.17	2	.21	3 <sup>2,3,4</sup>
Iceland	1.77	4	.35	1 <sup>2</sup>
Ireland	1.74	4	.20	2 <sup>1,2</sup>
Israel	1.58	4	.00	0
Italy	1.66	4	.38	1 <sup>4</sup>
Japan	1.77	4	.16	1 <sup>1</sup>
Mexico	1.00	3	.00	0
Netherlands	1.31	3	.02	0
New Zealand	1.19	3	.59	0
Norway	2.22	4	.02	0
Poland	1.63	4	.12	1 <sup>2</sup>
Portugal	1.15	3	.02	1 <sup>2</sup>

Slovakia	0.93	3	.31	2 <sup>2,4</sup>
Slovenia	1.99	4	.63	3 <sup>2,3,4</sup>
S. Korea	1.47	4	.13	1 <sup>1</sup>
Spain	2.24	5	.18	0
Sweden	2.89	5	.18	0
Switzerland	3.46	5	.64	3 <sup>1,3,4</sup>
Turkey	.32	2	.41	1 <sup>2</sup>
UK	2.31	5	.19	0
US	2.7	5	.00	0

<sup>a</sup>Variable: Engaged society. Scale: 1 (Public deliberation is never, or almost never allowed.) to 5 (Large numbers of non-elite groups, as well as ordinary people, tend to discuss major policies among themselves, in the media, in associations or neighbourhoods, or in the streets. Grass-roots deliberation is common and unconstrained.). Interval scale estimates represent aggregated expert evaluations using Bayesian item response theory measurement model. Ordinal scale estimates are based on interval scale estimates translated back to the original ordinal scale after taking coder disagreements and measurement errors into account (Coppedge et al. 2016).

<sup>b</sup>Variable: Direct popular vote index. Scale (normalised): 0 (minimum) to 1 (maximum). Original scale: 0 (minimum) to 8 (maximum). Index is based on the aggregation of four types of direct democratic votes (popular initiatives, referendums, plebiscites, and obligatory referendums). Each type may receive a maximum value of two, resulting from a maximum value of one for both easiness of initiation and easiness of approval (Coppedge et al. 2016)

<sup>c</sup>Superscript numbers signal type of direct democratic instruments. One point for each of these direct democratic instruments: (1) Mandatory referendum; (2) veto-player referendum; (3) popular veto; and (4) popular initiative. Referenda that are not binding and only apply for specific questions are excluded. Types of direct democratic instruments may deviate from other indices due to different conceptualisations (Democracy Barometer 2014; see also International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015; Centre for Research on Direct Democracy; Initiative and Referendum Institute/s).

seem intuitively correct, e.g., the high level of deliberation in Switzerland and the extremely low level in Hungary and Turkey. Some results might surprise, e.g., the relatively low level of public deliberation in the Netherlands, where the historically strong elite culture might have had an influence. The finding on Italy as a country with the mediocre level of deliberation is in line with the findings on mediated deliberation (Pomatto and Seddone 2018). Also, a relative polarised country like Belgium reaches only a mediocre level, which is comprehensible.

Our intention is not to explain participatory developments, which would have required the introduction of several independent variables. This study aims at finding out whether patterns of democracy and participatory developments show the expected correlations. However, a factor that may have an impact on the extent of direct democracy or public deliberation within a country are economic resources. One can intuitively assume that a state's *resources* influence participatory developments, especially financial resources. However, as it becomes immediately clear from Table 2, economic resources cannot explain the level of direct or deliberative democracy. For example, rich countries like Switzerland and Norway could not be more different. Switzerland is leading considering direct democracy, whereas Norway scores low. And poor countries can be found on top of the list of direct democratic opportunities (e.g., Slovenia) as well as at the bottom (e.g., Mexico). Some relatively poor countries provide direct democratic options and public deliberation to a similar degree as relatively rich states, e.g., Luxembourg and Portugal (Scarrow 2001: 658; see Sintomer et al. 2005). Obviously, there is no clear relation between economic resources and the development towards either direct democracy or public deliberation. Accordingly, we decided not to include this variable into our analysis.

## Results

### Direct democracy versus public deliberation within consensus and majoritarian democracies

The data in Table 3 reveals that the relation between the type of a democracy and its extent of direct democracy versus public deliberation is far from clear-cut. Before comparing consensus and majoritarian democracies, we start with bivariate analyses of direct democracy and public deliberation within firstly consensus and secondly majoritarian democracies. As it becomes clear from Table 3 and Figure 1, there is no evident pattern within consensus democracies. Contrary to our assumption, consensus democracies do not score especially high on public deliberation, also, they do not score particularly low on direct democracy. All sorts of combinations occur. Consensus countries can be neither deliberative nor direct democratic (Netherlands); they can score high on public deliberation, but not on direct democracy, they can be very relatively strong considering direct democracy, but weak in public deliberation (Czech Republic); and they can provide relatively high levels of both public deliberation and direct democracy (Denmark). Also, the case of Switzerland, a consensus democracy, illustrates the confusing pattern: Considering public deliberation as well as direct democracy, Switzerland is unambiguously the forerunner. Among all OECD countries it scores best in both fields, which might not be surprising, because extensive direct democracy seems to enhance public deliberation, e.g., on the process of citizens' will formation (Kriesi 2012).

With respect to majoritarian democracies, the situation is puzzling as well. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, UK, as well as Canada—two typical majoritarian countries on the executive-parties dimension—do not stand out when it comes to direct democracy. Some majoritarian democracies are neither very direct democratic nor deliberative (Mexico); some of them are

**TABLE 3**  
Comparison: Pattern of democracy, level of public deliberation and direct democracy

	C vs. M. (Aarts et al. 2014)	Public deliberation (V-Dem)	Direct democracy (V-Dem)
Australia	M	4	<b>.23</b>
Belgium	C	4	<b>.03</b>
Canada	M	4	<b>.02</b>
Chile	M	4	<b>.02</b>
Czech Republic	C	3	.16
Denmark	C	5	.18
Finland	C	5	<b>.02</b>
France	M	5	.19
Germany	(M)	5	.10
Hungary	M	2	<b>.21</b>
Iceland	M	4	<b>.35</b>
Ireland	M	4	.20
Israel	C	4	<b>.00</b>
Italy	C	4	<b>.38</b>
Japan	C	4	.16
Mexico	M	3	<b>.00</b>
Netherlands	C	3	<b>.02</b>
New Zealand	M	3	<b>.59</b>
Norway	C	4	<b>.02</b>
Poland	C	4	.12
Portugal	M	3	<b>.02</b>
Slovenia	C	4	<b>.63</b>
Spain	M	5	.18
Sweden	C	5	.18
Switzerland	C	5	<b>.64</b>
UK	M	5	.19
US	M	5	<b>.00</b>

Notes: C = consensus democracy, M = majoritarian democracy; see Tables 1 and 2 for more information and for sources. **Bold = very high or low scores.**

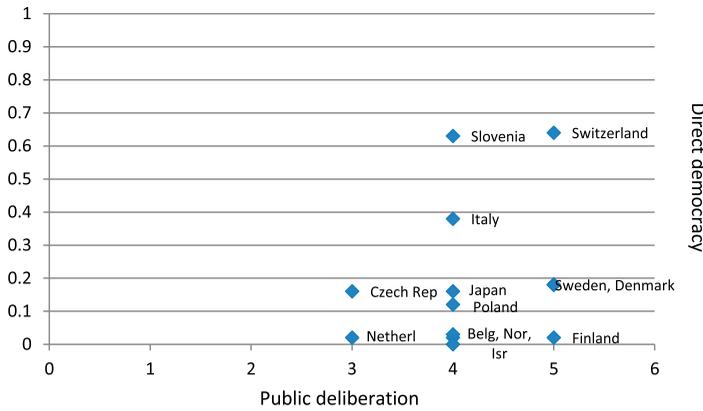
very strong considering deliberative democracy, but moderate for direct democracy (France, Spain, and the UK); or moderately strong in both fields (Australia). Only Hungary, a majoritarian democracy acts as expected and is relatively strong in direct democracy, but weak considering public deliberation.

In short, consensus democracies do not necessarily tend to solve their political issues in a more deliberative way and majoritarian democracies are not necessarily inclined to make decisions via aggregation of votes in referenda. The following table combines the information described above. We excluded countries with insufficient or unsatisfying data within one of the data sets e.g., Turkey and South Korea.

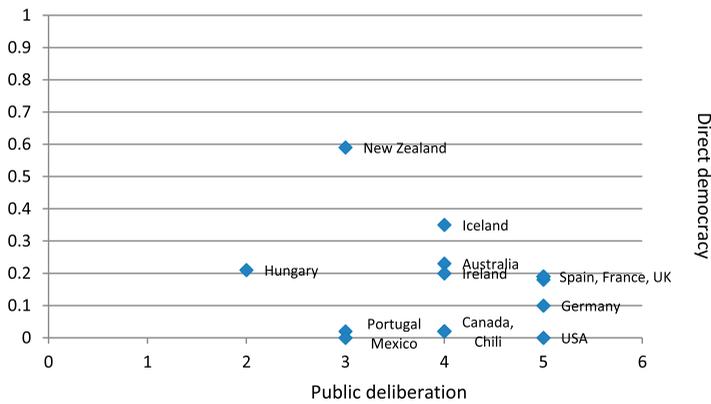
The two-dimensional maps in Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the lack of correlations within different types of democracy, the first figure focuses on consensus democracies and the second figure on majoritarian democracies.

#### Patterns of direct democracy versus public deliberation between consensus and majoritarian democracies

By comparing consensus and majoritarian democracies, we expected to find two different, distinct and unique patterns (hypothesis 3) with more widespread public deliberation in



**FIGURE 1**  
Direct Democracy and Public Deliberation in Consensus Democracies



**FIGURE 2**  
Direct Democracy and Public Deliberation in Majoritarian Democracies

consensus democracies than in majoritarian democracies (hypothesis 1) and more widespread direct democracy in majoritarian democracies than in consensus democracies (hypothesis 2). However, the analysis did not show support for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. Comparing the [Figures 1](#) and [2](#) reveals that public deliberation is as common in consensus democracies as in majoritarian democracies. The number of countries scoring above average in this dimension (four or above) is about the same for majoritarian countries and for consensus democracies. Likewise, there appears to be no clear-cut difference between direct democracy in majoritarian democracies and in consensus democracies. Again, the number of countries scoring above average in this dimension is about the same for consensus democracies and for majoritarian democracies.

The picture remains without a clear pattern when we examine the most deliberative and direct democratic countries. Among the most deliberative democracies (scoring five) are

majoritarian (UK, US, Spain, and France) as well as consensus democracies (Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark). The most direct democratic countries can be found among consensus democracies (Switzerland, Italy, and Slovenia) as well as among majoritarian democracies (New Zealand, Iceland, and Australia). And the least direct democratic countries (below nought point one) can be majoritarian democracies (Canada, Chile, the U.S) as well as consensus democracies (Belgium and Finland).

## Conclusion and Outlook

This article is the first to examine comparatively potential correlations between the level of direct democracy and deliberation in a society and its classification as majoritarian or consensus-oriented democracy. It examined whether democracies differ to the extent such that they are more direct democratic or deliberative. The answer to the question whether deliberative or direct democratic forms of participation are more dominant in consensus or majoritarian democracies is surprisingly unambiguous and definite: There is no clear pattern. Neither can we observe a dichotomy between public deliberative and direct democracy nor do majoritarian or consensus democracies show the expected tendencies. Whether a democracy prefers direct democratic instruments or public deliberation is neither a dichotomous choice nor is it related to the respective type of democracy.

Our findings imply that the level of direct and deliberative democracy in a country cannot be linked to the institutional settings identified by Lijphart. Lijphart (1999) already had concluded that direct democracy is neither typically majoritarian nor typically consensual. Moreover, as shown in this article, various combinations of models are possible within a country. One can find societies, which are both highly deliberative and direct democratic, within majoritarian as well as within consensus democracies. And, there are societies which are neither deliberative nor direct democratic within both types of democracy as well. There are deliberative majoritarian democracies as well as direct democratic consensus democracies.

As a result, we suggest to introduce a new categorisation of countries considering these non-representative forms of democracy, distinguishing four models of participatory democracy along the two axes of direct democracy and public deliberation. There are countries

- (1) which are neither deliberative nor direct democratic,
- (2) are both deliberative and direct democratic,
- (3) are more deliberative than direct democratic, or
- (4) more direct democratic than deliberative.

This could form the start for investigating new and relevant questions. A first question is an explanation of the lack of correlations. The non-correlations we found do require closer examination. What exactly does it mean, that obviously different types of democracies are similar considering their applications of direct democratic instruments or public deliberation? Other factors such as actors, national traditions, and supra-national involvements most likely play a role. Interests, ideologies and demands of actors, i.e., political representatives and citizens, might have influenced the participatory route a country took. Examples for the impacts of national traditions are the long tradition of direct democracy in Switzerland or a historically strong elite culture, as in the Netherlands. Finally, developments in the context of EU-convergence (Vatter et al. 2014) have to be taken into account as well as tipping points or critical junctures (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). More detailed research is necessary

to understand, why democracies move towards the deliberative and /or direct democratic model or adhere to the representative model.

In the future, more research is also needed on the consequences of the four models of participatory democracy on performance, i.e., on the question, whether the participatory development has any effect on a country's performance. Do, for example, countries with more public deliberation perform better or worse than direct democratic countries with regard to policy outcomes, and how does that relate to issues of legitimacy and citizens' democratic attitudes? How does the performance of countries look like, which score high in the deliberative as well as in the direct democratic field? And what about countries which are purely representative (neither deliberative nor direct democratic)? Our categorisation into four models of participatory democracy may serve as a starting point for future comparative research of these questions.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## NOTES

1. Research in the UK and the Netherlands already showed that direct democratic instruments are distributed in complex ways (Hendriks and Michels 2011; Vatter and Bernauer 2009).
2. Dialogue-oriented procedures include citizens' juries, citizens' forums, citizens' advisory committees, minority boards, consensus conferences, civic round tables, and many other forms at all levels of government (local, regional, national).
3. Excerpt from V-Dem Codebook:

Each type of popular vote receives a maximum score of two resulting from the addition of two terms (easiness of initiation and easiness of approval), where each term obtains a maximum value of one. [...] Regarding each type of citizen initiated popular vote (i.e., popular initiative or referendum), the ease of initiation is measured by (a) the existence of a direct democracy process, (b) the number of signatures needed, (c) time-limits to circulate the signatures, and (d) the level of government (national and/or subnational). Easiness of approval is measured by the multiplication of the quorums pertaining to (a) participation, (b) approval, (c) supermajority. The resulting score is then multiplied with (d) district majority. Consequences are measured by (a) the legal status of the decision made by citizens (binding or merely consultative), and (b) the frequency with which direct popular votes have been held in the past is. (Coppedge et al. 2016: 57–58)

4. Since the literature does not agree on all categorisations and our index deviates partly from other indices due to different conceptualisations (C2D; Democracy Barometer 2014; Initiative and Referendum Institute/s; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015).

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## APPENDIX

Indicator for public deliberation: Engaged society (V-Dem Codebook)

*Question:* When important policy changes are being considered, how wide and how independent are public deliberations?

*Clarification:* This question refers to deliberation as manifested in discussion, debate, and other public forums such as popular media.

*Responses:*

- 0: Public deliberation is never, or almost never allowed.
- 1: Some limited public deliberations are allowed but the public below the elite levels is almost always either unaware of major policy debates or unable to take part in them.
- 2: Public deliberation is not repressed but nevertheless infrequent and non-elite actors are typically controlled and/or constrained by the elites.
- 3: Public deliberation is actively encouraged and some autonomous non-elite groups participate, but it is confined to a small slice of specialised groups that tend to be the same across issue-areas.
- 4: Public deliberation is actively encouraged and a relatively broad segment of non-elite groups often participate and vary with different issue-areas.
- 5: Large numbers of non-elite groups, as well as ordinary people, tend to discuss major policies among themselves, in the media, in associations or neighbourhoods, or in the streets. Grass-roots deliberation is common and unconstrained.

Source: Coppedge et al (V-Dem working paper 2015:6), V-Dem codebook

Direct popular vote index (V-Dem codebook)

*Question:* To what extent is the direct popular vote utilised?

*Clarification:* Direct popular voting refers here to an institutionalised process by which citizens of a region or country register their choice or opinion on specific issues through a ballot. It is intended to embrace initiatives, referendums, and plebiscites, as those terms are usually understood. It captures some aspects of the more general concept of direct democracy. The term does *not* encompass recall elections, deliberative assemblies, or settings in which the vote is not secret or the purview is restricted. Likewise, it does not apply to elections for representatives. *Aggregation:* This index results from the addition of the scores of each type of popular votes studied (popular initiatives, referendums, plebiscites, and obligatory referendums). Each type of popular vote receives a maximum score of two resulting from the addition of two terms (easiness of initiation and easiness of approval), where each term obtains a maximum value of one. As we are studying four types of popular votes, the minimum value is 0, and the maximum is 8. In the v2xdd\_dd all scores are normalised to range between 0 and 1.

Regarding each type of citizen-initiated popular vote (i.e., popular initiative or referendum), the ease of initiation is measured by (a) the existence of a direct democracy process, (b) the number of signatures needed, (c) time-limits to circulate the signatures, and (d) the level of government (national and/or subnational). Easiness of approval is measured by the multiplication of the quorums pertaining to (a) participation, (b) approval, (c) supermajority. The resulting score is then multiplied with (d) district majority. Consequences are measured by (a) the legal status of the decision made by citizens (binding or merely consultative), and (b) the frequency with which direct popular votes have been held in the past. The index is aggregated.

Source: Coppedge et al (V-Dem working paper 2015: 6), V-Dem codebook